

Helps and Hints

Family Child Care Newsletter

Childhood Services

Arkansas State

University

2007

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And Much More!



Community Helpers

One of our goals in early childhood is to prepare children to become productive members of society. We support this goal by providing play activities that respect the normal stages of development while offering various experiences about people who help us. This edition of *Helps and Hints* focuses on ideas for activities about the various roles found in our neighborhoods and communities such as fire fighters, police officers, and bus drivers. Communities differ in structure, so we have included a wide variety of ideas for you to customize and make the experiences "real" for the children.

This theme is also a great opportunity to involve parents in your curriculum. Parents are one of a child's first lessons on roles in the local community. Sharing aspects of their job and workplace help make a valuable connection to the People Who Help Us.



Start planning now!

10th Annual

Family Child Care Conference

April 18-19, 2008

Holiday Inn

Jonesboro, Arkansas

Registration Information Coming Soon!
Call 1-888-429-1585 for more information.



Parent Involvement

- ☺ Send home a newsletter or letter informing parents of the Community Helpers theme.
- ☺ Ask parents to help in teaching children their addresses and important phone numbers.
- ☺ Ask parents to donate newspapers and/or any clothing that could help represent Community Helpers for the dramatic play area.
- ☺ This could also be a good time to stress the importance of Parent-Child interaction in the home.



Extra Helpers

www.preschoolexpress.com

www.familyeducation.com

www.preschoolprintables.com

www.time4learning.com

www.edhelper.com

www.funlessonplans.com

www.playdoh.com

www.creativeprek.com

www.lessonplanz.com

www.atozteacherstuff.com

Hospital Doctors/Nurses/Paramedics

Circle (Group) Time

- ☺ Read a story about a child's visit to the hospital to see a new brother or sister. Have children with young siblings recall their visits to a hospital nursery.
- ☺ Place a variety of doctors' and nurses' tools on a large tray. Tell the children to close their eyes. Remove one item from the tray. Then have the children open their eyes and guess which item has been removed. Continue playing the game using all of the items as well as providing an opportunity for each child.
- ☺ Collect a variety of items that promote good health such as a comb, a bar of soap, a facial tissue, an apple, a jump rope, and a small pillow. Place the items in a large bag. Have the children sit with you in a circle. Start telling a "good health" story about a child or an animal character. Then let the children take turns removing items from the bag and holding them up. As each item is displayed, incorporate it into your story. Continue until all the items have been used.



Start planning now!

NW Arkansas Spring Provider Conference

April 12, 2008

Jones Center for Families

Springdale, Arkansas

Registration Information coming soon!

Call 479-751-3163 for more information

www.nwachildcare.org



Art & Creativity

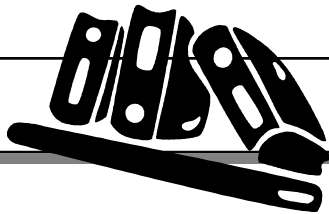
Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic Learning, Expression Through Art Forms and Activities 2.10-2.12

Cotton Swab Painting

Place cotton swabs, cottonballs and tempera paint on a table in the art area. The cotton swabs and balls can be used as painting tools.

Bandages for "Ouches"

Set out large pieces of construction paper and paints, crayons or felt-tip markers. Let the children draw pictures of themselves with two or three "ouches" on their bodies. Then give them adhesive bandages to attach to their pictures. As the children are working, encourage them to talk about shots, hurts or falls they have experienced. What did they do to help their "ouches" feel better?



Language Arts

Benchmarks: Language 5.2-5.10

- ☺ Display various health-related pictures in the room at the children's eye level, including doctors and nurses.
- ☺ Make up stories about situations involving a hospital. If you wish, let the children dramatize some of the stories.



Fine Motor

Benchmarks: 4.6-4.8

- ☺ Suggest that the children build their own hospital in the construction area. Help create the mood of the hospital by mounting pictures of newborn babies being held by a nurse, doctor, parent, or by showing an inside view of the human body.
- ☺ Explain that wheelchairs need ramps at the entrance of the hospital. Have children build ramps in the construction area.



Sing, Song, Sway

Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic, Expression Through Art Forms and Activities 2.4-2.9, Language Arts 5.5

To the Hospital

Sung to the tune of: "The Mulberry Bush"

This is the way we go to the hospital
Go to the hospital
Go to the hospital.

This is the way we go to the hospital
If we are sick in the morning,

This is the way we wait at the hospital
This is the way they take our pulse
This is the way they check our blood
This is the way they hear our heart
This is the way they take an X-ray
This is the way they put on a cast

This Little Child

Sung to the tune of: "This Old Man"

This little child, he felt sick,
Drove to the hospital—quick, quick, quick
They checked his ears and throat and head,
And sent him home to go to bed!

This little child, broke her toe,
Oh my dear, it hurt so,
Rushed to the hospital, X-rayed the little bone
Taped it up and sent her home.

This little child had a pain,
What it was, was not so plain,
They did some tests so they could tell
What medicine would make him well.

A Hospital Trip

I like to ride in a wheel chair
And turn it round and round
I like to take the elevator
And ride it up and down

I like to see the flowers and toys
They have in the gift shop
But there's one thing I do not like
That's when I get a shot! Ouch!

The Doctor in the Office

Sung to the tune of "Farmer in the Dell"

The doctor in the office
The doctor in the office
Hi-ho, the derry-o
The doctor in the office.

The doctor takes a nurse...
The nurse takes a patient...
The patient gets help...
The patient gets better...



Dramatic Play



Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic: Expression Through Art Forms and Activities 2.1-2.3

Set up a doctor's office in a corner of your room. Supply it with medical items such as white jackets, doctor bags, pretend prescription pads, a stethoscope, a bathroom scale, an eye chart, tongue depressors, bandages, cotton balls and cotton swabs. Let the children take turns being doctors/nurses and patients. Encourage them to take pulses, give pretend shots, listen to hearts, bandage arms and legs, write pretend prescriptions and give out healthy advice ("Get plenty of rest. Drink lots of orange juice. Exercise every day.")



COMING SOON!

Arkansas Fit Kids

For Family Child Care Providers

Help your children and families get fit!

Learn new ideas to encourage healthy eating and physical activity

Arkansas Fit Kids Activity Kit contains eight new learning activities for every month of the school year.

Brought to you by:

Arkansas State University Childhood Services
Child Care Connections
DHS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
Special Nutrition Food Program





Books Worth Reading

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual Learning: Language Arts 3.1-3.5

The Hospital

Doctor DeSoto

Corduroy Goes to the Doctor

Froggy Goes to the Doctor

It's Check Up Time, Elmo!

Day In the Life of a Doctor

My Friend the Doctor

Going to the Doctor

Daisy the Doctor

Danny Goes to the Hospital

Doctors and Nurses: What Do They Do?

My Daddy is a Nurse

Emergency Room

What Happens When You Go to the Hospital

Debbie Bailey & Sue Huszar

William Steig

Don Freeman

Jonathan London

Sarah Albee

Linda Hayward

Joanna Cole

Anne Civardi

Felicity Brooks

James Collier

Carla Greene

Mark Wandro

Julie Steedman

Arthur Shay



Firefighters



Art & Creativity

Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic Learning, Expression Through Art Form and Activities 2.10-2.12

- ☺ For each child, use a newspaper to make a folded paper hat. Secure all loose edges with tape. Let the children use crayons or felt-tip markers to color their hats red. Fold back one corner of each hat and staple it in place. Then attach a yellow construction paper badge shape on which you have written a numeral of the child's choice.

- ☺ Place waxed crayons and paper on the art table for the children to create a design during self-initiated or self-directed play. Place a clean sheet of paper over the picture. Apply a warm iron. Show the children the effect of heat. This activity needs to be carefully supervised. The caption "crayon melting" may be printed on a bulletin board. On the board place the children's pictures identifying each by name in the upper left hand corner.





Sing, Song, Sway

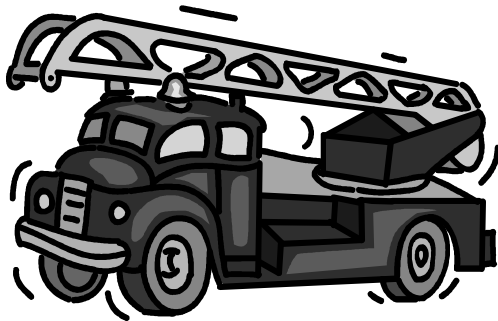
Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic, Expression Through Art Forms and Activities 2.4-2.9, Language Arts: 5.5

The Fire Truck

The big red fire truck rushes down the street.
"Clang, clang, clang" goes the bell.
The cars move to clear the way.
The children run and yell.
The fire fighters roll out the heavy hose.
They put up ladders with a bang.
They fight the fire and then start back.
And the bell goes, "clang, clang, clang."

Down By the Station

By the fire station early in the morning
See the red fire trucks all in a row.
Hear the jingling fire bell sound a loud alarm now
Whoo, whoo, clang, clang, off we go!



Ten Brave Firefighters

Ten brave firefighters sleeping in a row.
Ding, dong, goes the bell.
And down the pole they go.

Off on the engine, oh, oh, oh!

Using the big hose, so, so, so.
When all the fire's out, home so slow
Back to bed, all in a row.

I'm a Firefighter

Sung to the tune of: I'm a Little Teapot

I'm a firefighter
Dressed in red
With my fire hat
On my head

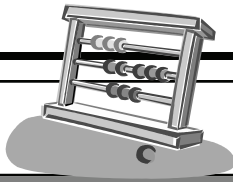
I can drive the fire truck
Fight fires, too,
And help to make things
Safe for you.

Down at the Firehouse

Sung to the tune of: "Down By the Station"

Down at the firehouse
Early in the morning
You can see our clothes
Hanging in a row.
When there is a fire,
We can dress real fast.
Boots, jackets, hats, and gloves,
Off we go!

(fingers curled to make sleeping men)
(pull down on the bell cord)
(with fists together make hands slide down the pole)
(pretend you are steering the fire engine very fast)
(make a nozzle with fist to use hose)
(curl all fingers again for sleeping men)



Math and Manipulatives

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual Learning—Mathematics and Science, 3.10, 3.13, 3.15

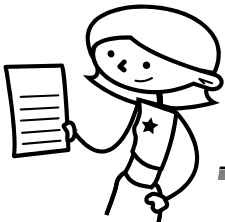
- ☺ Cut a piece of rubber tubing into various lengths. The children can sequence the pieces from shortest to longest.
- ☺ Match pictures of equipment.



Science

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual Learning—Mathematics and Science 3.19-3.25

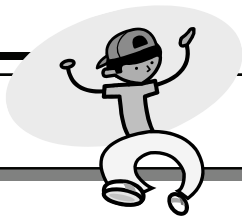
- ☺ Have a variety of shapes, different colors and sizes. Have the children sort these by color, shape, or size.
- ☺ Have a stone that has been placed in the sun for several hours. Have another stone that has been placed in the shade for several hours. The children can feel the difference in the temperature.



Fine Motor

Benchmarks: 4.6-4.8

- ☺ Select a rectangular cardboard carton to use for making a fire engine. Cut the bottom out of the carton with a craft knife. Open out the two long top flaps. Cut square holes in them to make the flaps into "ladders". Let the children paint the ladders white and the rest of the carton red. When the paint has dried, attach two small yellow paper plates for headlights and four large black paper plates for wheels. Cut holes for handles in the front and the back of the fire engine. Add a section of garden hose to hang out the black hole.
- ☺ Use cardboard rolls or oatmeal boxes to make fire hydrants.
- ☺ Build a fire truck out of cardboard boxes or oatmeal boxes.
- ☺ Make a fire axe-use cardboard.



Gross Motor

Benchmarks: 4.9, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13

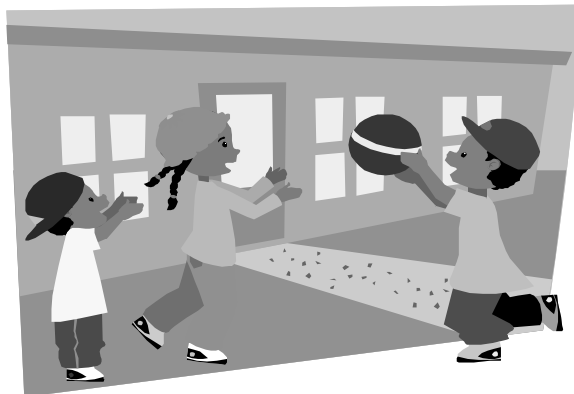
- ☺ **Make an obstacle course.** Let children follow a string or a piece of tape under chairs or tables, over steps and across ladders. This activity can be planned for indoors or outdoors.
- ☺ **Lead children in a firefighter's workout.** Do exercises like jumping jacks, leg lifts, and running in place.
- ☺ **Let the children pretend to train for becoming firefighters.** Lay a 6-foot ladder flat on the floor. As you hold on to the ladder, have the children try doing these activities: step between the rungs without touching the sides; walk just on the sides of the ladder; walk just on the rungs; jump back and forth over the ladder. Then stand the ladder on it's side and let the children try tossing beanbags through the openings between the rungs.



Health and Safety

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual—Mathematics and Science 3.13-3.15, 3.23; Physical Development: Health and Nutrition 4.3-4.5

- ☺ **Discuss safety rules dealing with fire.** Let children generate ideas about safety. Discuss why fire drill are a good idea. Practice a fire drill.
- ☺ **Each time you have a fire drill, talk with the children about how they should "Stop, Drop, and Roll"** if their clothes catch on fire. Clear a large area in the room or take the children outside to a grassy area. Have the children start walking or running in place. At a given signal, have them stop what they are doing, drop to the floor or ground and roll over and over until the pretend flames are out.
- ☺ **Make and eat "ladders" made from carrots, celery sticks, pretzels, bananas, etc.** Cut food in strips and place on plates in ladder design. The children can prepare the "Ladder Treats."





Block Center

Benchmarks: Experience Success 1.4-1.9

- ☺ Build a fire station out of blocks.
- ☺ Add fire engine, fire equipment, and firemen.
- ☺ Have fire trucks, police cars and small character people (fireman and policeman) glued on cardboard rolls.



Dramatic Play



Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic: Expression Through Art Forms and Activities: 2.1-2.3

- ☺ Place firefighting clothes such as hats, boots, coats for children to wear.
- ☺ Provide a bell to use as an alarm. A vacuum cleaner hose or a length of garden hose can be included to represent a water hose to extend play.

Sand and Water



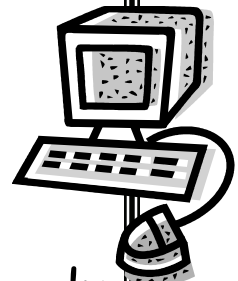
Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual Learning—Mathematics and Science 3.19-3.20, 3.23

- ☺ Add fire engines, firefighter dolls and popsicle sticks to make fences and blocks to make buildings or houses to the sand table.
- ☺ Have an old garden hose for the children to use as a fire hose. Secure a nozzle for the children to have an experience of altering the flow of water.

Don't forget to check out the registry
website for information about
Professional Development!

Visit

<http://professionalregistry.astate.edu>
daily for new information!





Books Worth Reading

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual Learning: Language Arts: 3.1-3.5

The Fire Cat

The Little Fireman

Curious George at the Fire Station

The Little Fire Engine

The Fireman

Careers with the Fire Department

Firegirl

What It's Like to be a Fireman

Firefighter, Firefighter

A Day with Firefighters

3 Little Firefighters

Firefighters to the Rescue

Stop, Drop and Roll

Firefighters A to Z

Esther Holden Averill

Margaret Brown

Margaret Rey and Alan Shalleck

Graham Greene

William Kotzwinkel

Johanna Pottersen

Gibson Rich

Arthur Shay

Michael Rex

Jan Kottke

Stuart J. Murphy and Bernice Lum

Kersten Hamilton and Rich Davis

Margery Cuyler and Arthur Howard

Chris L. Demarest



Police Officers

Circle (Group) Time

Who is Lost?

Have the children sit with you in a group. Choose one child to be the Police Officer. Tell the officer that you are looking for a lost child. Then describe one of the other children by giving clues such as these: "He is a boy. He had black hair and brown eyes. He is wearing a yellow shirt." Have the Police Officer look around the group, identify the lost child and bring the child to you. Continue the game, each time choosing different players.

Secret Message

Children sit in a circle and the police officer begins by telling a secret message to one child who whispers it to the next person, and so on until the circle is complete. The last child tells what he has heard of the secret. The importance of listening, and then recalling clearly is demonstrated.



Dramatic Play



Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic: Expression Through Art Forms and Activities: 2.1-2.3

Let the children take turns being police officers for the following activities:

Have officers pretend to direct traffic and tell others how to cross the street.

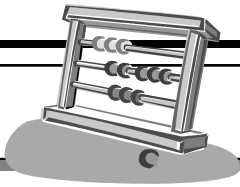
Let officers hand out "tickets" for breaking rules and good citizen awards for doing nice things for others.

Make pretend driver's licenses for the children to carry when using riding toys. If a child is stopped by an officer for not following established safety rules, have the child turn in his or her license for the day.

Let officers pretend to take lost children home after the children have stated their names and addresses. Or have the children tell the officers their home telephone number to call on a play phone.

Discuss the 911 emergency telephone number and when it is appropriate to dial it. Let the children practice dialing the 911 number on a play phone, reporting emergencies and giving their addresses so that officers can respond.

Put two telephones and telephone book in the dramatic play area. Hang up a sign showing the local emergency number. Encourage the children to look up telephone numbers and dial them.



Math and Manipulatives

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual Learning—Mathematics and Science

- ☺ Have the children draw pictures of police hats. Make each picture identical except design three different sizes. The children can sequence the objects from largest to smallest or smallest to largest.
- ☺ Draw pictures of police badges. Make each badge identical except different sizes. The children can sequence the badges from largest to smallest.
- ☺ Teach your children how to dial 911 (or 0) and the telephone numbers of relatives or friends who could help in an emergency. Write the numbers on separate index cards. Let your child glue a picture of a police officer on the 911 card and photos of relatives and friends on their corresponding telephone number cards. Laminate the cards. Then fasten them together with small metal rings to make a telephone book for your child. If desired, add a card with your child's photo and your complete phone number on it for the book's cover.



Gross Motor

Benchmarks: 4.9, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13

- ☺ Take a safety walk. Practice observing traffic lights when crossing the street. Point out safety hazards to the children.
- ☺ Use wheel toys to be police cars. Allow children to drive toys around the play area looking for children to help.
- ☺ Talk about traffic safety with the children. Explain that police officers can give tickets to people who do not follow the safety rules. Then set up streets on the sidewalk or in the play yard. Make a traffic light by covering a one-half gallon milk carton with dark paper. Cut out red, yellow, and green circles out of construction paper and glue in order on the covered carton. Place the traffic light on top of a dowel rod or broom handle that you can stick into the ground. Put out tricycles, bicycles, scooters, and doll carriages for the children to ride and push. Put out a police officer's hat and whistle and pad of paper and pencil to write tickets. Let the children take turns being the police officer, drivers, or pedestrians.



Sing, Song, Sway

Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic, Expression Through Art Forms and Activities 2.4-2.9, Language Arts 5.5

Manners Song

Sung to the tune of "Little Jack Horner"

I use my manners
Everyday
I try to be polite
I say "Yes Ma'am"
I say "No Ma'am"
And do it both day and night.

I use my manners
Everyday
I try to be polite
I say "Yes Sir"
I say "No Sir"
And do it both day and night.

Red Light

Red light, red light
What do you say?
I say, "Stop" and stop right away

Yellow light, yellow light
What do you mean?
I mean "Wait" until the light turns green.

Green light, green light
What do you say?
I say "Go" but first look both ways.

Thank you, thank you
Red, yellow, green.
Now I know what traffic lights mean.

Traffic Lights

Do you know what traffic lights say to you?
Do you know what traffic lights say to do?
Yellow says, "Be careful."
Green says, "You may go."
But red is most important
It says, "Stop" you know.

The Police Officer

I am a jolly police officer standing
straight and tall.
When I hold my hat up high, the
cars all stop and wait.
When I spread my arms out you may
cross the street.
Do not run or walk too fast, but do
not drag your feet.

9-1-1

Sung to the tune of "Three Blind Mice"

9-1-1, 9-1-1
Help's on the way, help's on the way
If I need help, I know what to do
I can call the police and the fire-
house, too,
It makes me feel safe to know what
to do.
Dial 9-1-1.



Sing, Song, Sway

Do You Know the Police Officer?

Sung to the tune of "The Muffin Man"

Oh, do you know the police officer,
The police officer, the police officer?
Oh, do you know the police officer
Who helps me cross the street?

If You Get Lost

Sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle"

If you get lost on any street
Don't talk to any stranger.
Look for a police officer and she'll keep
you out of danger.

Tell her what your name is
Where your house is too
She will help you get back home
Or bring your Mom to you!



Seat Belt Song

Sung to the tune of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"

Seat belt wearing is no joke
Here's a safety tip.
For yourself and for your folks
Wear it every trip.

With a click, click here
And a click, click there
Here's a click
There's a click
Everywhere a click, click
Everybody wears seat belts
When in the car they sit

Mom is wearing her seat belt
E-I-E-I-O
Mom is wearing her seat belt
As on the way we go.

Papa is wearing his seat belt...
Brother is wearing his seat belt...
Sister is wearing her seat belt...

Sanitation Workers

Circle (Group) Time

- ☺ Have the children pretend that they are driving a garbage truck. Stop at each house and say, "We are stopping at Josh's house. (Use all of the children's names in your group). Josh, what are we picking up in your garbage today?" Have Josh say what is going into the garbage. Continue this way until you have stopped at all of the children's homes and picked up the garbage.
- ☺ Play a thinking game. Have the children think about and then name all of the places in their homes where they can throw or get rid of their trash. To get them started say, "The waste basket in the bathroom."
- ☺ Play a variation of Duck, Duck, Goose. The children can sit in a circle. One child holds an item to recycle and walks around the circle saying "recycle" as he taps each child on the head. When he gets to the one he wants to chase him, have the child drop the item and say "recycle". Then both children run around the circle until they return to the item. The chaser gets to "recycle" the item by walking around and repeating the game.





Sing, Song, Sway

Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic, Expression Through Art Forms
and Activities 2.4-2.9, Language Arts 5.5

Down at the Dump

Sung to the tune of "Down by the Station"

Down the dump,
Early in the morning,
See the garbage trucks
Standing in a row.
See them dump the garbage
In a great big pile,
Dump, dump, dump, dump
Watch them go.

Pretty soon out dumps
Will all be full,
We have better figure out
Something to do.
We could all recycle
Some of our trash
Recycle, recycle
Watch us go.

Out in the garden
We could make a pile
Of all our food scraps,
So they can decay.
See us dump the scraps
In a great big pile,
Dump, Dump, Dump, Dump
Watch us go.

Then we could recycle
All our cans and jars, So they could be
used
To make some new ones.

See us put the cans and jars
In a great big bag,
Dump, dump, dump, dump
Watch us go.

Let's all recycle,
Let's all give a hand,
Cause if we recycle
We'll have a nicer land.
See us sorting out
All of our garbage,
Sort, sort, sort, sort
Watch us go.

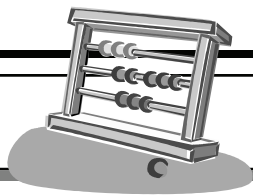
Trash Song

Sung to the tune of "London Bridge"

Trash is blowing all around,
All around, all around.
Trash is blowing all around
All around the town.

Let's get busy and pick it up,
Pick it up, pick it up.
Let's get busy and pick it up,
All around the town

Put the trash in a big trash bag
Big trash bag, big trash bag.
Put the trash in a big trash bag,
All around the town.



Math and Manipulatives

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual Learning—Mathematics and Science, 3.10, 3.13, 3.15

Get the Trash in the Can

Have the children take turns throwing newspapers rolled into balls into trash cans.

Cut out magazine pictures of things that go in a compost pile, such as leaves, grass, shrubs, tree branches, straw, fruits, vegetables, coffee grounds, tea leaves and eggshells. Then cut out magazine pictures of things that do not go in a compost pile, such as plastic bags, paper, jars, and soap. Cover the pictures with clear self-stick paper for durability.

Tell the children about compost piles and how they turn some kinds of garbage into a material that can be used to make plants grow bigger and stronger. Then show the children the pictures. Have them help you sort the pictures according to things you



Dramatic Play



Benchmarks: Creative/Aesthetic: Expression Through Art Forms and Activities: 2.1-2.3

Garbage Truck

Provide a wagon, overalls, hats, garbage cans, trash, shovel, and a broom for this play theme. The children may pull the wagon from trash can to trash can, emptying the cans into the wagon and then taking the garbage to the "dump site."

Add signs that say "Trash", "Don't Litter" or "Adopt a Mile".

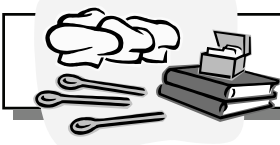


Block Center

Benchmarks: Experience Success 1.4-1.9

Cut the tops off pairs of cardboard milk cartons and put each pair together to make blocks.

Add trucks to block center for children to pretend that they are garbage trucks.



Cooking and Children Mix Well

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual—Mathematics and Science 3.13-3.15, 3.23; Physical Development: Health and Nutrition 4.3-4.5

Save the seeds when you cut a pumpkin. Rinse the seeds, if desired. Melt butter or margarine in a pan and add a dash of Worcestershire sauce. Mix with the seeds. Spread seeds out on a cookie sheet and sprinkle on a little salt. Bake at 350 degrees, stirring occasionally, until the seeds are brown and crispy. Roasted pumpkin seeds can be eaten shells and all.



Health and Safety

Benchmarks: Cognitive/Intellectual—Mathematics and Science 3.13-3.15, 3.23; Physical Development: Health and Nutrition 4.3-4.5

Sorting Recyclable Garbage

Collect all of your recyclable garbage such as aluminum cans, plastic soft drink bottles, tin cans, glass jars, and cardboard in one box. Help the children sort the garbage into separate piles. Hint: have the children wear gloves to protect his or her hands.

What Can I Do With This?

Explain to the children that we throw away a lot of garbage. One of the ways we can decrease that amount is to use objects over and over again instead of throwing them away. Give each child an object that ordinarily might have been put in the garbage. Ask each child to describe something he or she could do with the object.

Litter-Free Picnic

Take the children to a park and have a picnic lunch. When the lunch is over, have the children carefully gather up all of their garbage and throw it away in a garbage can.



Child Health ALERT

A Survey of Current Developments Affecting Child Health Care

How Accurate is Medical Information on the Internet?

More and more parents are turning to the Internet for medical information, but a number of studies have suggested that the kind of information available can range from highly accurate and complete to nothing more than commercial interests trying to sell their products. In the latest study of this important topic, dermatologists looked up a common condition, "infantile hemangioma", a kind of birth mark in infants that grows rapidly in the first few months of life and then shrinks over a period of years. The large majority are harmless and don't require treatment. However, parents can become quite anxious when hemangiomas go through the phase of rapid growth, and may turn to the Internet for reassurance.

The authors, 8 pediatric dermatologist, examined the kinds of information provided on the first 50 websites that came up when they searched Google for "hemangiomas". They considered 32 of the 50 to be uninformative, since they were either duplicates or described hemangiomas that were quite different from infantile hemangiomas. The 18 "informative" sites varied in the accuracy and completeness of the information and photographs they included. Most of the 8 dermatologists found only 4 that they would recommend to parents. (*Minzer-Conzetti K et al: Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology, December 2007, pp.998-1004*)

COMMENT: The results of this study are inline with others that have reviewed medical information on the web—some sites are accurate and complete but most are not.

Though it may take a bit of reading, most people can figure out which website is just promoting a product or service. What's harder to understand is which website reflects a point of view that isn't based on medical or scientific evidence. In the current report, the authors found that about half the websites—who aren't pediatric dermatologists—may not recognize that fact and could be misled, confused, or scared by what they read.

The bottom line is that the Internet continues to expand the amount of information available to all of us, but it remains a difficult task to find out which sources provide medical information that is reliable, complete, and trustworthy.